

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) A welding wire package comprising a drum or box with a central axis, multiple layers of looped welding wire defining a stack wire to be paid out, said stack having an upper ring shaped surface with an outer cylindrical surface and an inner cylindrical surface defining a central bore concentric with said central axis and a flexible permanent magnet retainer ring on top of said upper ring shaped surface, said retainer ring allowing welding wire to be paid from under the ring upwardly from said central bore.
2. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 1 wherein said flexible magnet ring has a thickness in the general range of 0.10-0.01 inches.
3. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 2 wherein said flexible magnet ring has a magnetic strength of less than 1.0 Megagauss Oersteds.
4. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 1 wherein said flexible magnet ring has a magnetic strength of less than 1.0 Megagauss Oersteds.
5. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 4 wherein said flexible magnet ring [[has]] is annular with an inner generally circular edge [[with]] having a diameter greater than the diameter of said inner cylindrical surface of said wire stack.

6. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 3 wherein said flexible magnet ring [[has]] is annular with an inner generally circular edge [[with]] having a diameter greater than the diameter of said inner cylindrical surface of said wire stack.

7. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 2 wherein said flexible magnet ring [[has]] is annular with an inner generally circular edge [[with]] having a diameter greater than the diameter of said inner cylindrical surface of said wire stack.

8. (Currently amended) A welding wire package as defined in claim 1 wherein said flexible magnet ring [[has]] is annular with an inner generally circular edge [[with]] having a diameter greater than the diameter of said inner cylindrical surface of said wire stack.

9. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 8 including a cylindrical core in said bore of said welding wire stack.

10. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 4 including a cylindrical core in said bore of said welding wire stack.

11. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 2 including a cylindrical core in said bore of said welding wire stack.

12. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 1 including a cylindrical core in said bore of said welding wire stack.

13. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 12 wherein said flexible magnet ring has an outer periphery generally matching said outer cylindrical surface of said wire stack.

14. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 13 wherein said outer periphery is generally circular.

15. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 8 wherein said flexible magnet ring has an outer periphery generally matching said outer cylindrical surface of said wire stack.

16. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 15 wherein said outer periphery is generally circular.

17. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 4 wherein said flexible magnet ring has an outer periphery generally matching said outer cylindrical surface of said wire stack.

18. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 17 wherein said outer periphery is generally circular.

19. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 2 wherein said flexible magnet ring has an outer periphery generally matching said outer cylindrical surface of said wire stack.

20. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 19 wherein said outer periphery is generally circular.

21. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 1 wherein said flexible magnet ring has an outer periphery generally matching said outer cylindrical surface of said wire stack.

22. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 21 wherein said outer periphery is generally circular.

23. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 4 wherein said flexible magnet ring includes ferrite particles in a flexible non-magnetic binder.

24. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 3 wherein said flexible magnet ring includes ferrite particles in a flexible non-magnetic binder.

25. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 2 wherein said flexible magnet ring includes ferrite particles in a flexible non-magnetic binder.

26. (Original) A welding wire package as defined in claim 1 wherein said flexible magnet ring includes ferrite particles in a flexible non-magnetic binder.

27. (Previously presented) A retainer ring for use in a drum of looped welding wire said ring being a flat sheet of flexible permanent magnet material with an outer periphery and an inner periphery said outer periphery having a diameter large enough to substantially cover the looped welding wire.

28. (Original) A retainer ring as defined in claim 27 wherein said ring has a thickness in the general range of 0.10-0.01 inches.

29. (Original) A retainer ring as defined in claim 27 wherein said ring has a magnetic strength of less than 1.0 Megagauss Oersteds.

30. (Original) A retainer ring as defined in claim 27 wherein said ring includes ferrite particles in a flexible non-magnetic binder.

31. (Previously presented) A retainer ring for use in a drum of looped welding wire, said ring being a flat sheet of permanent magnet material with an outer periphery and an inner periphery said outer periphery having a diameter large enough to substantially cover the looped welding wire.

32. (Original) A retainer ring as defined in claim 31 wherein said ring has a thickness in the general range of 0.10-0.01 inches.

33. (Original) A retainer ring as defined in claim 31 wherein said ring has a magnetic strength of less than 1.0 Megagauss Oersteds.

34. (Original) A retainer ring as defined in claim 31 wherein said ring is flexible and includes ferrite particles in a flexible non-magnetic binder.

35. (Currently amended) A method of controlling the payout of a welding wire in a package at a welding operation, said package comprising a stack of multiple layers of looped welding wire having an annular top and an oppositely facing bottom, said method including:

(a) applying a flexible magnetic retainer ring on the top of the wire stack such that said ring applies a magnetic field to the top of said stack; and,

(b) pulling said wire from said stack for feeding to said welding operation.

36. (Currently) A method as defined in claim 35 wherein said applying act is by providing retainer ring is a flexible permanent magnet retainer ring made from ferrite particles in a non-magnetic binder over the top of said stack.

37. (Original) A method as defined in claim 35 wherein said applying act is accomplished by an electromagnet.

38. (Previously presented) A welding wire package comprising a drum or box with a central axis, multiple layers of looped welding wire defining a stack wire to be paid out, said stack having an upper ring shaped surface with an outer cylindrical surface and an inner cylindrical surface defining a central bore concentric with said central axis and a retainer ring having a substantially flexible retainer ring body on top of said upper ring shaped surface, said retainer ring allowing welding wire to be paid from under the ring upwardly from said stack.

39. (Previously presented) A welding wire package as defined in claim 38 wherein said flexible ring body has a thickness in the general range of 0.10-0.01 inches and is a polymer.

40. (Previously presented) A welding wire package comprising a drum or box with a central axis, multiple layers of looped welding wire defining a stack wire to be paid out, said stack having an upper ring shaped surface with an outer cylindrical surface and an inner cylindrical surface defining a central bore concentric with said central axis and a flexible retainer ring on top of said upper ring shaped surface, said retainer ring allowing welding wire to be paid from under the ring upwardly from said stack, said flexible ring has a thickness in the general range of 0.10-0.01 inches and is a polymer, and said flexible ring is a permanent magnet sheet.

41. (Previously presented) A welding wire package as defined in claim 38 wherein said flexible ring body has a thickness in the general range of 0.10-0.01 inches and is rubber.

42. (Currently amended) A welding wire package comprising a drum or box with a central axis, multiple layers of looped welding wire defining a stack wire to be paid out, said stack having an upper ring shaped surface with an outer cylindrical surface and an inner cylindrical surface defining a central bore concentric with said central axis and a flexible retainer ring on top of said upper ring shaped surface, said retainer ring allowing welding wire to be paid from under the ring upwardly from said stack, said flexible ring has a thickness in the general range of 0.10-0.01 inches and is rubber, and said flexible ring is a permanent magnet sheet comprised of ferrite particles in a non-magnetic binder.